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NEWS — GOVERNMENT

Forest Street subdivision gets preliminary green light, but residents urge caution

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

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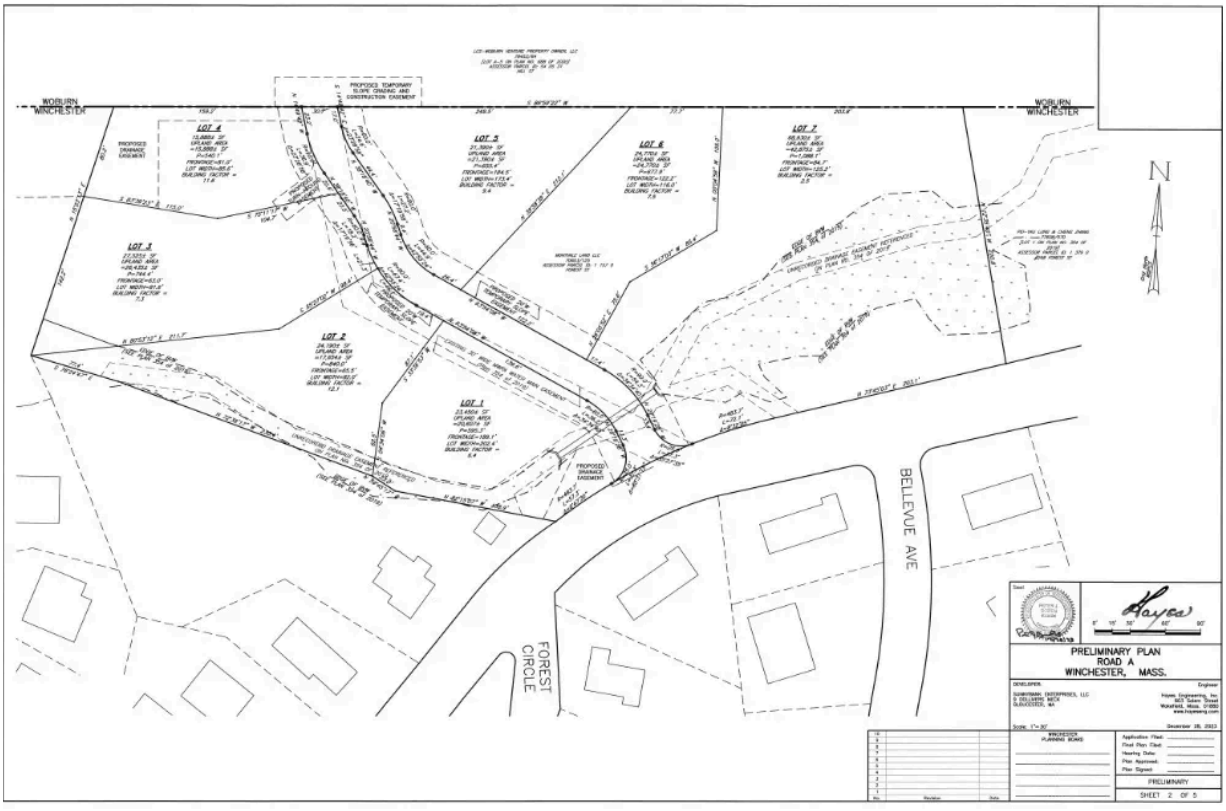

A detailed view of the Forest Street project's proposed seven lots, which have sparked community debate over environmental and safety concerns. COURTESY PHOTO/TOWN OF WINCHESTER

The proposed seven-lot subdivision on Forest Street in Winchest
received preliminary approval from the Planning Board, but the p

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still has a long way to go.

Town Planner Taylor Herman outlined the two-step process for subdivision approval, explaining the developers, Sunnybank Enterprises, LLC, have only completed the first step by presenting their initial proposal to the board.

“The first step is the preliminary subdivision application. The second is the definitive subdivision,” Herman said. “In order for them to submit a definitive subdivision, they’re going to have to do a lot more work.”

The Planning Board’s preliminary subdivision decision — obtained by the Winchester News — reveals the board voted 5-0 to approve the project with conditions on Jan. 23, 2024. The decision states the seven proposed lots meet the minimum requirements for the RDB-10 zoning district.

However, the board also identified several areas where the developer needs to provide additional information and address concerns before submitting a definitive subdivision plan. These include working with the Conservation Commission to determine if the lots are buildable, collaborating with the Fire Department on road design for safety compliance, and submitting a more detailed roadway improvement plan.

Herman emphasized the complexity of the site, noting the presence of wetlands, an intermittent stream and significant slopes, that could pose challenges for development.

“It’s a pretty complex site to build on because of the amount of slope there,” he said.

Some residents have raised blasting concerns.

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The preliminary decision also requires the developer to hire an outside consultant to conduct a peer review of water, sewer, drainage, stormwater, utilities and the project's overall environmental impact. The results of these reviews must be submitted with the definitive subdivision application.

"The amount of work that's going to need to go into this project — I don't think that I'm going to see anything new from this project until at least the middle of summer," Herman estimated, emphasizing the extensive requirements the developer must meet.

One unique aspect of the Forest Street subdivision is that the proposed roadway would be located on an easement held by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA). This means that in addition to securing approval from the Town of Winchester, the developer must also obtain permission from the MWRA to use the land for the road.

Residents raise concerns

Despite the preliminary approval, Herman acknowledged many residents have expressed concerns about the project's potential environmental impacts, such as the removal of trees, water quality issues, and disruption of natural habitats.

"I have heard more people in opposition of the project than in support," he said.

Tracy Olson, an abutter to the proposed subdivision, submitted a letter to the Planning Board highlighting the parcel's importance as a wetland resource, wildlife habitat, and a relatively large undeveloped area in Winchester that contributes to carbon sequestration and climate resilience. Olson urged the board to protect the wetlands and mi tree clearing within 200 feet of the stream.

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Chris Giddy and Karey Cropper also expressed their concerns in a letter to the Planning Board, stating that the proposed subdivision would have a significant negative impact on the environment and wildlife habitat. They emphasized the importance of preserving the natural beauty and ecological value of the area.

“Several times a day, you see different animals make their way from the woods downstream and back again in the early morning or at nightfall,” they write. “This five-acre parcel is also an important wildlife corridor for animals.”

As the developer works to address the Planning Board’s conditions and prepares a definitive subdivision application, the town will continue to monitor the project’s progress. The definitive subdivision review process will provide additional opportunities for public input and scrutiny of the proposal’s details.

Herman said if the definitive subdivision plan is approved, the seven single-family homes planned for the site could potentially sell for more than the average Winchester home price of $1.2 million.

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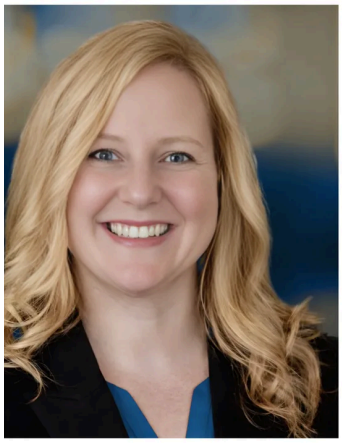

NEWS

Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

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March 4, 2026

NEWS

Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

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NEWS

Winchester gun owners face new training rules starting April 2

Public safety data How Winchester compares on firearms licenses in comparable Massachusetts communities Active licenses

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Sen. Jason Lewis, Mass. Senate strengthen fair housing protections for rente

The following was submitted by the Office of Sen. Jason Lewis: State Sen. Jason Lewis

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as of Jan. 25, 2025 — Source: Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board License to carry firearms Firearms identification card Winchester and Marblehead are the focus communities. Peers selected based on comparable population size, demographics and suburban

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joined his colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate to pass legislation that protects residents from discrimination in the housing market as the Trump administration abandons its enforcement of the federal Fair Housing Act. Illegal discrimination continues

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Celebrate Women's History Month with Girls Leading Change

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: To mark Women's History Month and International Women's Day in 2026, the Network for Social Justice is collaborating with club leaders from Winchester High School and members of the Community Health team from La Colaborativa in Chelsea and

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FEATURES

‘Chicago: Teen Edition’ dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents “Chicago: Teen Edition,” a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS
March 4, 2026

EVENTS

Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents ‘Syldason: You Are Welcome Here’

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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